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THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE

SUGGESTIONS FOR LEADERS OF BIBLE CLUBS USING THE OUTLINE COURSES

Every month from October to June there will be presented in this department of the BIBLICAL WORLD suggestions to leaders of Bible Classes, desiring to use as a basis for classwork either the outline Bible-study course on "THE LIFE OF CHRIST" prepared by ERNEST D. BURTON, or that on "THE FORESHADOWINGS OF THE CHRIST" by WILLIAM R. HARPER. Suggestions are prepared by GEORGIA LOUISE CHAMBERLIN, Secretary of the Reading and Library Department of the AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE, who will be glad to consider any questions which club leaders may choose to address to the INSTITUTE.

The Life of Christ¹

The eleven sections of the outline which command our attention this month present Jesus in the exercise of his power over nature, over disease and death, and over the hearts and consciences of man. The healer, the teacher, and the human friend are equally conspicuous. We find him testing his disciples in their first commission, and upon their return, facing one of the great crises of his life, in the feverish desire of the mob to crown him king. Two wonderful discourses close the selection.

In the handling of this material, the leader or the members of the class will have great opportunity to contribute local color in connection with each of the sections. Sudden storms upon the Sea of Galilee (Sec. 58); Gadara, and the relation of demoniacal possession to insanity (Sec. 59); oriental funeral customs (Sec. 60), are suggestions.

A simple reading of the section titles will indicate the necessity of getting a true background for the event described. The considerable geographical territory involved will also render a map study helpful. Most of all, however, it is important that each session of the class should emphasize

clearly the progress made by Jesus in his effort to give to his disciples and to others his point of view, and his interpretation of life and its meaning.

Program I

Leader: The three Galilean preaching tours of Jesus. The distinctive character of each, the purpose of all, and the end accomplished.

Members of the Class: (1) Jesus' miracles upon natural objects as distinguished from his miracles upon man: With what motive worked, and for whose benefit. (2) Faith as a condition of Jesus' miracles: Was it always necessary, was it always exercised by the person to be benefited; did it vary in different cases, and how? (3) A study of Nazareth in its relation to Jesus as boy and man. (4) Conditions of health and disease in the Orient as may be inferred from the stories of Jesus' activities. (5) An oriental funeral (a procession in costume). (6) The spirit of Jesus manifested in the story of Jairus' daughter.

Subject for discussion: What relation, if any, have the instructions given to the

¹ The textbook for this course is *The Life of Christ*, by ERNEST D. BURTON; 50 cents, plus 4 cents postage. Address the AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE, University of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.

disciples as to their conduct and method of life in their missionary journeys, to the life of Christian ministers today?

Program II

Leader: Herod Antipas: The nature of his political power, his family history, his personal character.

Members of the class: (1) The story of the life and death of John the Baptist, and an appreciation of his character. (2) Jesus as seen through the eyes of Herod, of John the Baptist, and of the people whom he fed. (3) Jesus' view of himself and his mission as shown by his refusal to be king, and his later discourses. (4) Jesus' conception of sin compared with that of the Pharisees. (Definite illustrations.) (5) Jesus' method of dealing with temptation.

Subject for discussion: Why did Jesus feed the five thousand one day, and refuse

to feed them the next? Has his action any bearing upon feeding the hungry today?

REFERENCE READING

Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, I, chaps. xxiv-xxx; II, chaps. xxxi, xxxii; Stalker, *The Life of Christ*, pp. 95-105; Edersheim, *Jesus the Messiah*, pp. 177-242; Gilbert, *The Student's Life of Jesus*, pp. 242-53; Farrar, *The Life of Christ*, chaps. xxviii-xxxi, xxiii, xxiv; Rhees, *The Life of Jesus*, pp. 130-37; Burton and Mathews, *The Life of Christ*, chaps. xiv, xv, xvi; Holtzmann, *The Life of Jesus*, chap. x.

Consult Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* for articles on "The Sea of Galilee," "Demons," "Gadara," "Blindness," "Ceremonial Law," "Commission," "Corban," "Defilement," "Funeral," "Multitude, Feeding of the," "Hypocrisy," "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles." Articles on many of these subjects will be found in the four-volume and the one-volume edition of Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*.

The Foreshadowings of the Christ¹

For the first time since beginning our course, we have the opportunity to spend considerable time in the study of the life and work of one man. Two months are required in which to gain a small degree of appreciation of the work of Isaiah. The long period, fifty years or more, during which this man uttered his warnings saw the complete overthrow of the kingdom of northern Israel, and many political changes in southern Israel. It will be necessary, therefore, to understand clearly the conditions of the particular decade in which the prophet is working if we would fairly interpret his message. The large amount of what may be termed "messianic material," in the thought and speeches of this prophet, makes the study particularly rich in foreshadowings of the Christ.

But the work of Isaiah is interesting not alone for its contribution to the political

movements and the religious thought of his times, but not less on account of the majestic and beautiful literary style of the author. The addresses of Isaiah can be chronologically arranged only on the basis of the internal evidence of the addresses themselves. This evidence is not always clear, and authorities differ upon the dates to which some of the chapters may be assigned. Clearly, a large proportion of the first thirty-nine chapters relate to the wars between the north and the south, and the earlier invasions of the Assyrians. The tendency among scholars is to place at a later date those passages in these chapters which present religious conceptions more in harmony with the thought of a later period. Chaps. 40-66 of this book called by the name of Isaiah seem to refer to the Babylonian captivity as a present or past occurrence, and all of this portion of the book

¹ The textbook for this course is *The Foreshadowings of the Christ*, by William Rainey Harper; 50 cents, plus 4 cents postage. Address the AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE, University of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.

has been attributed to an author or authors living during and following the Exile.¹

Program I

Leader: The political, moral, and religious conditions in Judah and Israel in the early years of Isaiah's work.

Members of the class: (1) The call of Jehovah to his prophets, (a) Moses, (b) Samuel, (c) Elijah, (d) Elisha, (e) Amos, (f) Hosea. (2) The reading of Isaiah, chap. 6, and the discussion of this story in comparison with the stories under Topic 1. (3) The characteristics of the messianic kingdom as pictured by Isaiah and as contrasted with conditions which surrounded the prophet. (4) Isaiah's conception of sin. Did it differ from that of the prophets which preceded him?

Subject for discussion: Did God direct the history of the Hebrews more fully than that of any other nation?

Program II

Leader: A careful map study of Palestine in relation to Syria, Assyria, and Egypt, and a discussion of the political relation-

ships of these nations in the eighth century B.C.

Members of the class: (1) King Ahaz and his problems estimated by a politician of his own day. (2) An appreciation of the attitude of Isaiah toward the plans of Ahaz. (3) An interpretation of Isa. 7:1-25. (4) Isaiah's characteristics as an orator.

Subject for discussion: To what extent were the prophecies of Isaiah fulfilled in the coming of the Christ and the founding of the Christian religion?

REFERENCE READING

Kent, *The History of the Hebrews*, II, 120-40; Wade, *Old Testament History*, pp. 355-64; Smith, *Old Testament History*, chap. xii; Kent, *Historical Bible*, III, 123-50; Chamberlin, *Hebrew Prophets*, chap. ix; George Adam Smith, *Isaiah*, Vol. I; Sanders and Kent, *Messages of the Earlier Prophets*, pp. 79-108; Goodspeed, *Israel's Messianic Hope*, chap. v; Harper, "The Child Prophecies of Isaiah," *Biblical World*, IV, 259 ff.; *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, *Century Bible*, and *Bible for Home and Schools*, volumes on Isaiah.

Consult Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, one-volume and four-volume editions, on Uzziah, Ahaz, Ramaliah, Pekah, Syria, Assyria, Book of Isaiah, Isaiah, Damascus, Samaria, Seraphim.

¹ These are matters of historical criticism, and the leader must decide for himself as to whether the members of his class are ready for discussions of the methods of historical criticism. If they are, this is a good point at which to introduce them. If they are not, the passages are taken up historically, and may be discussed intelligently in their historical connection, without raising the literary question. It will be discovered that people as a rule are ready to accept the results of historical study without question, because they are seen to be sane and reasonable.